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# Back Home



# BACK HOME

BY  
CHARLES PHILLIPS

Far off thou art, yet ever nigh:  
I have thee still and I rejoice:  
I prosper, circled with thy voice:  
I cannot lose thee tho' I die!  
—Tennyson.

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DEDICATION  
TO ALL WHO LOVE, AND LOVING  
UNDERSTAND

## "WHERE MOTHER IS, IS BEST."

---

Sure as the wingéd arrow shoots,  
Straight as the crow flies west,  
Unerring as the eagle sweeps  
The heavens to his nest,  
My heart sends all its wishings home—  
"Where Mother is, is best."

When Fortune smiles in this fair land,  
And all the world is dressed  
In sunny garb, and all the skies  
Smile at my soul's glad zest,  
Oh, then would I go singing home—  
"Where Mother is, is best."

And when the gloom and shadows come,  
And, faltering in the test,  
I fail, and fain would lean upon  
Some heart for strength and rest,  
Ah, then my heart turns wearily,  
"Where Mother is, is best."

Where Mother is, there Heaven is,  
There all the charms possessed  
Of peace and joy and dear content  
Await at love's behest—  
Where mother is my heart would stay—  
"Where Mother is, is best."

Yes, I would bring my burdens home,  
And lay my head at rest  
In her dear lap; or singing bring  
The fairest fortunes guessed  
In our long dreams, to make her glad!  
"Where Mother is, is best!"

God keep her safe among those scenes  
Of home so dear, so blest!  
O, long as love and mem'ry live,  
And long as Faith's confessed,  
My heart will cry to all the world,  
"Where Mother is, is best."

## PART I

Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest,  
Home-keeping hearts are happiest.  
The bird is safest in its nest:  
To stay at home is best!

—Longfellow.



## BACK HOME

---

**N**O, I do not forget. For all my  
days  
Are thronged with thoughts of  
you, my evening hours  
Are filled with recollections. Day and  
night  
My comings and my goings all are  
sweetened  
And pleasant made with memories of  
you.  
Now even as I write to bring you near  
With chronicles of old home days, my  
heart  
Is sudden clamorous made with many  
thoughts  
As if, with yearning's eager, hurried  
hand  
I threw the door of all the past wide  
open  
And started all the trembling wings of  
memory  
To rushing flight and swift returning  
welcome.  
Ah, well they know me, these dear  
doves of memory,  
And clamorous they beat their wings  
around me,  
Till, in the soft onrushing music made  
By the attentive flutter of their wings,

I hear a strain of sweet familiar voices;  
Till, in the cloudy hypnos of their wing-  
ing,  
Mine eyes see visions of old scenes I  
love.

If the drowsed solace of the dreaming  
pipe  
Were mine, how languorously now  
might I  
Lean back upon the soft surcease it  
brings  
And give the curling smoke free will to  
weave  
Its visionary pictures! But the sound  
Of memory's persistent wings is none  
The less inviting, tho' I sit alone  
In smokeless solitude. Nay, but I sit  
Apart from all the life about me, living  
A part in other days. No little thing  
Here in this room, so far from home,  
but speaks  
Of home and you. Father, I never hear  
The sound of building and of saw and  
hammer,  
But am reminded of the days you built,  
And we, your boys, were early let from  
school  
To bring your dinner pail. I wonder  
now  
How often we took furtive "peeks" be-  
neath  
The cover of that pail to see if doughnuts

Were tempting there, in brown, sweet,  
    odorous richness?

Even the table that I write upon  
Speaks of the little home-made desk of  
    pine

You made for us—that wondrous treas-  
    ury

Of slates, and pencils, and geographies,  
And, in the later years, repository  
Of “Poultry Heralds” and the “Bee  
    Journal,”

And neatly stored-up housewife’s handy  
    things.

Ah, but I love that little old pine desk,  
And many a time my heart goes longing  
    back

To the dark evenings when my little  
    lamp—

The smallest lamp of all, the only one  
That had a pedestal—showed me the  
    way

Thro’ Arden forest and Verona’s streets,  
And lit the page of Lear’s wild stormy  
    story.

For it was at that desk I, elbows crook’d,  
And eager-eyed, and on the chair’s sharp  
    edge,

First learned the lore of Shakespeare.

    Ah, what worlds

Of wonder Avon’s bard has shown me  
    since

Those days of Charles and Mary Lamb!  
What desks  
Of night-hour study and of swift day toil  
I've delved and scribbled at since those  
first hours  
Out in the kitchen. Then I never  
stirred  
Till from the living room the call, thrice  
given,  
Came for the evening prayer. And if,  
sometimes,  
I told my Rosary beads with thoughts  
far off  
In English lanes or on the bright Rialto,  
'Twas but a child's rejoicing in discovery  
Of fairy worlds that he prayed Heaven  
to open.

Softly! I hear them now—those evening  
prayers,  
And the swift sounds of memory's wings  
become  
The mingled voices of the Rosary.  
First, mother's, low and even—and the  
prayers  
From her dear lips sound now the sweet-  
est music  
My ears will ever hear;—then father's,  
low,  
And in his voice something of solemn  
chant.  
So one by one, with lowly reverence  
The sacred mysteries were told—and  
proudly,



If I so hap was chosen to repeat  
Some of the prayers. Ah, vesper voices,  
    calling  
Forever to me from the deathless past,  
I hear you and I heed your treasured  
    message!  
Voices of by-gone days, where sound ye  
    now?  
One is uplifted in the Eternal Chorus;  
One, of that Mary named for her whom,  
    suppliant,  
We begged sweet intercession, still is  
    breathing  
Prayers for us all, tho' foreign bound-  
    aries sunder;  
One, of the little sister, lifts to-night  
A pleading prayer, upon the western  
    plain;  
One is to-night with yours again com-  
    mingled  
In evening prayer. And one—ah! since  
    I know  
No blessing breathes there that I do not  
    share in,  
With all the joy that being remembered  
    brings,  
And all the sorrow separation makes,  
One voice, I cry to you across the moun-  
    tains,  
Is lifted up in prayer and blessing on  
    you,  
In praise to God for all the gifts He's  
    given;

And chiefest of those gifts the un-  
measured bounty  
Of your dear love and care and constant  
blessing!

No, I do not forget!  
You live and move in all my work and  
pleasure,  
And would that words could measure  
half the motive  
Of good you daily give me. Think you,  
father,  
That the long, weary days of toil and  
labor,  
Of sweat in sun-hot fields, of cold and  
hardship  
In winter days, were lost? And you, my  
mother!  
In one the truest wife, the dearest  
mother  
A home has ever hidden! Think you  
ever  
The burdens you have borne, the cares  
you've carried,  
The sorrows you have hidden in your  
heart,—  
Think you these all, my mother, have  
been only  
The weight of crosses? Nay! if on your  
soul  
They have perforce weighed down, upon  
your children  
They sit as crowns, with all the signal  
uplift

Of coronals! And in our hearts we  
    carry  
The greatest heritage that man may  
    claim—  
Sonship to a great mother, a good  
    father!

No, I do not forget! There in that valley  
Named for the Holy Cross, I see in  
    vision  
The little church you built, first monu-  
    ment  
To rise upon the plain in verity  
To prove the Risen Christ! Now two-  
    score years  
Have put their marks of wind and  
    weather on it,  
But still it stands, those hand-hewn tim-  
    bers firm  
Upon their base, those joists so staunchly  
    joined  
That age and usage cannot shake their  
    setting;  
Still from that cross-tipped spire the little  
    bell  
Rings out its summons thro' the parish  
    bounds,  
To gather in the sons and children's  
    children  
Of that far day when your strong voice  
    commanded,  
And your still stronger arm lifted and  
    guided

The last great beam of that first prairie  
chapel.  
And in they troop; and if, among them  
now,  
Few there may be who keep you in re-  
membrance—  
None but that dear and only sister left,  
And that one brother who remains to-  
day,  
(And, in the choir loft, those who know  
your worth,  
And mingle thoughts of you in chant  
and hymnal)—  
Still there is one, one unforgetting  
Friend,  
One Comrade of those early days whom  
time  
Can never change, whose loyalty is  
deathless,  
Whose love is Life itself, whose com-  
radeship  
Has been your constant help—aye, there  
is One  
Who never will forget. There on the  
altar,  
There in that tabernacle that your hands  
Built of the insensate, now all sacred,  
wood,  
He is, in plenteous grace. Your hands,  
my father,  
Built Him this roof; and He will still  
remember

There was a time when doors were  
closed against Him,  
"No room within!" Your skill, my  
father, fashioned  
This shelter and this little sanctuary,  
And He will not forget that time there  
was  
When He had not whereon to lay His  
Head.

O little church, on the Wisconsin prairie,  
Where the rich valley of the Holy Cross  
Pays tribute to the fruitful sun, you call  
me  
Many a time when thro' the hurrying  
city  
I hasten on my way and hear bells ring-  
ing—  
You call me to your humble sanctuary;  
And many a time, tho' plain and peak  
may sunder,  
I kneel within your hallowed quiet.  
There  
I entered first the portals of the chosen,  
When sacramental waters, given in  
baptism,  
Regenerated me. There first I heard  
The sweetly solemn music of the organ  
And listened to uplifted voices singing.  
I see you now, O little church, well  
named  
After that saint upon whose feast my  
father

First saw the light! St. Patrick, great  
Apostle  
Of Christ's unfailing Faith! 'Behold the  
tribute,  
My father, in his strong prime, paid his  
patron;  
True sign he loved and honored that fair  
name  
His natal day bestowed him. You, O  
saint  
Of Tara's Hill, whom Erin's sons re-  
member  
With love and praise—you brought to  
Druid Ireland  
The light of Truth, the bounty of God's  
presence.  
Behold! one son bearing your noble name  
Gave of his best, his all, to lift the same  
Tri-signet cross above the prairie pines,  
Thus bearing on the undying fire you  
lighted  
On Tara's summit and all Ireland's  
hills;—  
So praising God through you, his great  
Apostle!  
Pray for my father, O St. Patrick! Bles-  
sings  
Ask the good Christ for him with every  
stroke  
Of that far prairie bell. Fill all the  
heavens  
With prayers and blessings for him, O  
good people,  
Kneeling to God beneath the roof he  
builded!

Mass over, surely you remember, folks,  
How the wide church-yard thronged with  
people! Sunday  
Was a long week's event in those old  
days;  
Then neighbors met for friendly chat and  
gossip,  
Stored up, since last the whirring wheels  
of buggies  
And Sunday rigs and democrats and  
buckboards  
Broke rudely, with swift clouds of dust,  
upon  
The housewife's gossip, or new jelly  
recipe,  
Or youths' and maidens' all self-con-  
scious silence,  
Or farmers' talk of crops and cattle  
sales:—  
O, all the world was centred there, and  
sorrow  
Was given sweet surcease in friendly  
words,  
The Sunday guest was greeted and made  
known  
To cousins and relations (by the dozen),  
The price of wheat was argued, and  
potatoes  
Were championed as next year's banner  
crop.  
The widow's tears sprung fresh upon  
the sight  
Of stalwart men who but a week before

Had borne her life-companion to the  
grave;  
And by her smiled the new-made mother,  
proud  
To show her hushling baby to the  
women,  
While sage advice was poured into her  
ears,  
And questions asked and answered with  
that wisdom  
The heritage of mothers since first Eve  
Nursed Adam's sons. Life, pulsant and  
refulgent,  
Hummed in the churchyard, while the  
roses bloomed  
And filled the paths with all the sum-  
mer splendor  
Of sunny June.

And then all warningless  
A wind came stirring from the grove  
of oaks  
And blew the bending roses till the grass  
Was strewn with flowery snow. And  
so our eyes  
Follow the warning finger of the wind  
And seek the grave-yard's grassy slopes,  
where sleep  
Those who await us, yet whose memory  
Remains as living as the verdant sod  
That marks their corporal resting place.  
Beneath  
This slender marble shaft, all mellowed  
now



And stained with age, the dust of loved  
ones lies,  
A father's mother, whom I never saw;  
A brother and two little baby sisters.  
How often have I knelt beside that plot  
And prayed for them, the while my wondering fancy  
Strove to make pictures of the might-have-been.  
These were the first graves I had known.  
Yet death  
Spoke never from them in its bitterness,  
For rest and hushed repose, among the  
roses,  
Or underneath the quiet of the snows,  
Breathed round about. Ah! graves have  
opened since  
To dull my heart and darken all my  
vision;  
Yet now, with some of life's long lessons  
learned,  
Those first graves ever seem to bring  
the truer  
And holier message. Rather this—the  
thought  
Of them has helped me grasp the heavy  
meaning  
Of graves that hold hearts of my actual  
knowledge.  
No grave was ever opened to receive  
The silent dead that did not, too, enclose  
Some of the very heart-core of the living.

So runs the tale! Death in the midst  
of life!  
The living crowd all busy with its talk-  
ing,  
Laughs in reply beside the sleeping  
throng;  
But even rarest gossip has an end,  
And tired young mothers must haste  
home again,  
And farmers to their stock, and lovers  
hurry  
To keep their tryst—and widows, heavy  
hearted,  
Must turn their weary feet once more  
to hearths  
That coldly wait: “Up, Dick! Whoa,  
Jenny!”—“Hurry!”  
The road resounds with voice and whirr  
of wheels,  
And all the world is for a little while  
A dust cloud! Down we go, with call-  
ing voices,  
Along the rattling road, and leave be-  
hind  
The church and churchyard, soon—how  
well I know it—  
To brood in strange and solitary quiet  
Through all the long, bright Sunday,  
and the days  
Of plow, or harvest, till the bell again  
Summons the prairie people to the altar.  
Yet, One remains; and, in the wondrous  
quiet

That broods about, that little church and  
    churchyard  
Seem suddenly the land of heart's desire,  
The domain of the disenthralled, the  
    gateway  
Of wide eternity itself.

                                But down the road  
The spokes spin and the hoofs make  
    merry clatter.  
I know the old road well. To-day re-  
    turning,  
I'd look for Padden's store and once  
    again  
Know the good smacking taste of ginger  
    snaps:  
For many a time you bought us ginger-  
    snaps  
On the way homè from Mass. That I  
    remember,  
And the white cottage hidden in the  
    bushes  
Between the "Corners" and the church.  
    And now  
I vaguely see the old bent bearded man  
Who greeted us from out the cottage  
    gateway.  
One other memory of early Sundays  
I keep secure—the days when fate de-  
    creed  
We children stay at home. But solemn  
    service  
Was celebrated still, the round-turned  
    legs

Of our toy-table, stately candlesticks,  
Cigar boxes our altar, and a towel,  
(The brighter-patterned and the deeper  
fringed  
The better) for our vestment. The re-  
turn  
From Mass we watched with eager wish  
and wonder,  
Hoping for "goodies" or, far better still,  
Some cousin's visit. If the cousin  
came—  
And truly then, "the more the merrier,"  
What escapades we had in that red cart,  
Disk-wheeled, you made for us! And O,  
the wonder  
Of watching swallows build their 'dobe  
houses  
Under the barn eaves; or the martens  
fly  
Out from the bird-house, and dart in  
again.  
And there were straw-piles for the  
wildest slides,  
Where only clouds of chaff could drown  
our shrieks,  
Of Indian-like delight; then hay-loft  
plunges,  
When from the dizzy rafters down we  
leaped  
Upon the prickly hay. That took more  
daring  
Than hunting eggs, or chasing little  
pigs—

Unless a sharp-beaked setting hen defied  
us,  
Or angry sow snapped grunting at our  
heels.  
Out in the apple orchard, O what finds  
Of wind-fallen, juicy-hearted, golden  
crabs,  
Or mealy "winters"!

Ah, how memory  
Revives the past; the world takes on  
the hues  
Of that bright portulaca bed, the pride  
Of all the women folks. O happy days!  
Sweet days of wild flowers, plucked when  
barefooted  
We went across the fields with dinner  
pails,  
Finding wild roses and sweet-william  
by the furrow.  
O, what a thorny way it was when feet,  
All flower-belated, must make haste  
across  
The cruel stubble! Roses then had  
thorns;—  
And life had lessons, tho' we knew it  
not.  
The day returning from the fields, I saw  
A green snake dart between the sun-  
scorched stones  
Out in the trodden pasture, lives still  
vivid  
And makes the sight of crawling creat-  
ures still

So sense-abhorrent that I shudder at it.  
And when, pray, will I ever mount a  
horse

Without recalling that dread hour of  
terror

When from the back of our old dapple,  
Fanny,

Plodding her well-known way from bars  
to stable,

I fell, amid the clatter of the harness,  
Into the mud—and fairly died of fright?  
To-day she browses in Elysian pastures.  
Curly, the dog, whose dumb fidelity  
Made change of masters, death, is dead  
and gone

These many years, and even his silky  
coat

That made a cap for his new owners—  
(O,

How heartless that grim fate seemed  
then to me!),

Has served its time. The little disk-  
wheeled cart,

Whose red was faded by the rain to  
pink,

Made kindling, with the little bird-house  
sharing

It's axy fate. What tragedies those  
were!

And time has never healed their poig-  
nancy!

How memory beguiles me, on and on!  
The moving finger writes, the Past re-  
lives

In passing panorama. So it is  
Thro' all my waking days there center  
'round

The thought of you, these pictures of the  
Past;

Thirst brings me bending o'er the well  
again;

Hot city pavements lure my feet in  
wishing

Down elm-green lanes, o'er cool dark  
kitchen floors;

And tempting pitchers of the lemonade  
That mother mixed so magically, tease  
My reminiscent taste with icy tinkle  
And beady sweat. O, once again to wear  
A big straw hat, with dripping rhubarb  
leaves

Doused with the well's clear brew,  
packed in its crown!

O, happy days of bird and brook and  
rose-leaf!

O smiling days of boyhood, gone for-  
ever!





### LOST LITTLE BOY.

---

O little boy, how pure you are, how fair!  
And what a wonder in your big gray eyes,  
Like to the heavens, when sweet suns  
surprise  
The silver rains! I see you laughing there  
Light-heart, so far away! No cloud of care  
Has crossed the sunny April of your skies.  
Ah, how the world has changed! My sore  
heart cries  
For one brief little day your joy to share!

Lost little boy, I love you as of old,  
And all the dear companions of your day;  
But, ah, how futilely for you I sigh!  
Yet in the night my world-worn hands I  
fold  
And kneel me down to the Great Lord to  
pray—  
For all that's good of me, sweet boy, is  
you, so fair, so high!



## PART II

Faces and places are soon forgot

In the pride of life's endeavor,

But the home of the child, be it palace or cot,

Lives on in the mind forever.

—James Riley.



**H**OW evening rested quietly and still  
Upon the dewy lawn! The moon  
came up

Over the eastern groves, and silvered all  
The dreamy world, and made more sil-  
very still

The music of sweet horns we listened to,  
Played on by magic breath within the  
grove.

Clear on the silence, falling when the  
horns

Ceased their far cries and melody of  
bugling,

Broke a shrill monotone from the still  
pond,

The hymnal of the frogs. The sylvan  
town

Scarce stirred within its shadowy shel-  
ter. Stars

Beamed steady in the great untroubled  
sky,

The while the clear moon rode her  
wonted course.

And now, perhaps, a cool wind, rising  
up,

Makes mother and aunt Minnie draw  
their aprons

Over their shoulders. "It is growing  
cool!"

Still silence reigns. Then far along  
the night

A warning engine cry, and soon the  
darkness

Is pierced and cloven with a meteor,  
The quiet shattered by the rumbling  
    noise  
Of whirring steel across the shuddering  
    bridge.  
Out from the engine's throat the smoke  
    and sparks  
Belch forth, lit by the sudden livid  
    glow  
Of fireman's open door—as sudden  
    closed;  
And like a frightened terror, on and  
    on  
The night Express speeds on its way,  
    soon lost  
Behind the echoing hills. 'Tis bed-  
    time now.

The days grow shorter and the wind  
    more cool,  
Till evenings in the open air give away  
To fireside hours. The frost comes,  
    and the snow,  
And winter rules in bitter winds that  
    drift  
The snow against the window-panes,  
    and frost  
That paints the glass fantastic with its  
    scrolls.  
When with warm breath we blow upon  
    the pane  
And clear away the feathery congeal-  
    ment  
To peer into the night, behold a world

Brought to a wondrous pause upon its  
way

All still beneath the mystic witchery  
Of winter! Blue and pale it lies en-  
thralled,

Dumbly submissive to the buffet-breath  
Of polar blasts, yet strangely beauti-  
ful

In all its utter hush. Turn we again  
Back to the fire, the reading lamp, the  
books,

Or mayhap to the puzzling strategy  
Of checker-board. Dear evening hours  
at home!

Ah! many a world-worn heart would  
give, to-night,

A brilliant barter of triumphant nights  
For one brief hour of your good, peace-  
ful quiet.

The checker-board — life wrought in  
miniature,

With wisdom's slow reward made ac-  
tual

In king-rows—man's resources—kept  
intact,

And folly's giddy way brought to con-  
fusion.

The victory was never mine!—but I  
Learned more than checker playing at  
the game.

Study there was—and books always al-  
lured me.

("Only this page to finish," was the cry

At bedtime always). So now, best of all,  
I like to think of that small reading circle  
Our household made, when, gathered all  
together,  
We laughed at Peter Pepper's wild adventures  
In Ireland—read aloud. But over all  
The books, and better even than my  
Shakespeare,  
Were those old tales you told of Ireland,  
father!  
You have forgotten them, perchance,  
nor mind the telling;  
But not so I! Those stories still live  
on  
In memory, a constant source of pleasure,  
And all the wondrous land of glens and  
fairies  
Of moonlit abbey ruins and of bridges  
Built by the "good people"—Ballyhadereen,  
Loch Gara, with its fiddling lads aferrying  
The lassies over,—the "Big House,"—  
the rooks  
And owls that made the abbey tower  
dreadful  
With ghostly portent; all, all this remains,  
The land I mapped all clear in my  
young mind's eye



While eager ears were hearkening to  
your stories;  
'Tis just as fresh and green in my imag-  
ining  
As in your youthful memory. Nor ever  
Can heavy winds go soaring thro' the  
night  
But I, almost in childish terror, live  
The "Night of the Big Wind" over  
again;  
I hear the scream and booming of the  
tempest,  
The rattle of the flying slate-roof shin-  
gles,  
The roar of all the wild, unearthly tu-  
mult  
That sails along the gale, as if old ocean  
Himself in anger, came to sweep your  
threshold.  
"An awful night at sea!" I hear you say.  
"Great shipping scattered and de-  
stroyed." All Ireland  
Was filled with fugitives from off the  
sea,  
And ballad singers were abroad, recount-  
ing  
The havoc of the wind. Now, thro' the  
black  
And shivering night, I see the men out,  
tying  
The oat stacks down, and fastening  
the house roofs

To save them. Then a wilder, fiercer  
crying  
Comes on the wind's voice, and a sudden  
crash!  
And tumbling from the chimney falls a  
stone!  
It struck "Aunt Peggy" on the head:—  
see! I remember!  
Do you remember this? A little lad,  
Sudden awakening in the night-stilled  
house  
And finding himself utterly alone.  
Out, terrified, he leaped, and sped away  
Across the fields, white, naked, like a  
fairy,  
And frightening all the rabbits in the  
furze,  
Crying his grief and terror to the winds  
Till loving arms—the arms he sought—  
secured him!

Now, far at sea, a sailing ship appears,  
With precious freight—one of those ar-  
gosies  
Of hope and sorrow, bitterness and joy,  
Poor stricken Ireland set upon the sea  
To find their way to "rainbow's end!"  
The storms  
Lash the loud sea to yawning rage; the  
wind  
Blows every way but journey's way; the  
stars  
And all the heavens are blotted out in  
darkness.

Sick and despairing grow the once brave  
exiles,  
So pitiless the power of Heaven seems  
turning  
Against their every hope and prayer.  
Yet one,  
A young lad, busy with his tools of trade  
When need finds use for them, makes  
hearts look up  
And smile and take new courage from  
the lesson  
Youth teaches. Friends he makes, and  
cheer he brings  
Wherever his light steady step and eyes  
Of smiling candor go. The same lad  
grows  
In strength and sinew (honoring the  
calling  
Of Nazareth's good Saint), till man-  
hood's years  
Are won. The days speed on; the New  
West calls  
And so the far Wisconsin prairie wins  
The best of Canada. O men and women  
Who braved the frontier, never counting  
cost  
Of ease and comforts given for the ma-  
king  
Of hearts and homes! O pioneers!  
What poem  
Can tell your worth! What song can  
sing the courage  
Of tender women, out upon the prairie!

Armies win martial glory, statesmen live  
In stirring words on history's bright  
pages,

But Fame's far splendor, nor the soldier's  
glory

Can ever measure all the honor due  
The pioneer—the quiet men and women  
Who made the new land home! You  
were the builders!

Church, spire, and many a roof attest it!  
Yet

In our old home are prizes far more  
precious

That tell one's skill in Joseph's goodly  
trade,

And speak the magic of a mother's pres-  
ence.

No need to tell—your father was before  
you

A carpenter and cabinet-maker, deft  
In all the arts of his important trade  
That made the builder, in his day, the  
carver

Of bed as well as beam, of chair and  
table

As well as roof and floor. Nor need to  
say

The gentle art of making home was  
learned,

The nimble finger trained in needles' art,  
Dear mother, long before the prairie  
won you.

For there the little farm-house in the  
trees  
Stood as a landmark for all travelers—  
“The house that has the curtains”; and  
the guest  
Found a sweet gentlewoman’s magic  
spell  
Making “a garden in the wilderness.”

St. Patrick’s day again! The winter,  
passing,  
Gives glimpses of the green beneath, as if  
A pledge that Ireland’s shamrocks still  
are growing.  
Come, then, pin on your green, and let  
us go  
Out to the “Corners” for the celebration.  
Rich oratory rings along the rafters,  
And from the organ-loft the stirring  
notes  
Of “Patrick’s Day,” “The Wearing of  
the Green,”  
“Faith of Our Fathers”—and then, “God  
Save Ireland”  
Sweep thro’ our Irish hearts! And lo,  
once more  
The best thoughts of the past return, the  
years  
Long fled, renew, the world grows young  
again!

Then "God Save Ireland" say we all of  
us,

And God save you and bless you boun-  
tifully!

St. Patrick's rarest blessings all be yours.  
O may the sorrows of your heart be few,  
And always like the sorrows of old Ire-  
land,

With Hope's bright rainbow ever shin-  
ing thro',

And may your joys and blessing be as  
many

And all as beautiful as all the sham-  
rocks

In all of Ireland, with the dew upon  
them!

St. Patrick's day again, God bless us;  
surely

This is the night then for potato cake—  
Potato Cake! Ah, surely, one forgets  
The sharp points of this life when  
creamy patties,

Swimming in golden butter, piping hot,  
Melt in one's mouth. Potato cake!

There's not

In all of Ireland, nor the whole world  
over

One who can make potato cake like you,  
Mother,—no Irish blarney this, I tell you!

Only a little of the dear old story  
Have I reviewed. Thoughts throng with  
memory,

Words rush to picture all the past, and  
heart

Warms and beats higher in remembering.

Now comes the blessed Christmas time  
again,

The time when all hearts hark them back  
to home,

When families gather—if God be so  
kind—

And sons and daughters, parents and  
their children,

Assemble 'round the board. I count the  
days

Till I may be beneath the old home roof  
With you once more, making the present  
time

Better than best of "olden times." God  
grant

We'll keep our Christmas—and our New  
Year, too,

As now we plan, together, happy, glad  
Of blessings many, and so light of heart  
That "Merry Christmas" is the only word  
Can tell our story. Until then, "Good-  
night"

I call across the country, knowing well  
That all my thoughts, wherever I may  
roam,

Will be for you, the dear old folks back  
home.

## A VOICE IN THE CITY.

---

Draw the veil closer, closer! I would fain,  
Forever in the vision land remain!  
There is a shielding sense of peace I crave,  
Of shelter from the bruising world. The  
grave

Alone, perhaps, can truly give it me;  
For then my spirit, freed, may range the sea  
And, love-attended by unfettered dreams,  
Know the sweet Truth beyond May-be and  
Seems.

Draw the veil closer! Take me quickly now  
O pilot on the dream-ship's starlit prow!  
Save me, I cry! The iron is entering in,  
And soon my soul will only hear the din  
Of black machinery. For all too soon  
My life-pulse throbs to this discordant tune,  
Beating so tirelessly, my dulling sense  
Will yet mark music in its clashing tense,  
And, deafened to the song of star and flower,  
Bend and be broken in its crushing power.  
Draw the veil closer! Save me from the day  
That dreadfully impends, when, far away,  
The waves of my dear sea in vain will weave  
The song I love so well. O let me leave  
This alien place before I utterly die!  
For even now my soul makes feeble cry!



[Written for the eightieth birthday of my father, Patrick Phillips, March 17, 1908. First published for private circulation, December, 1908; reprinted August, 1911; third edition, November, 1911.]

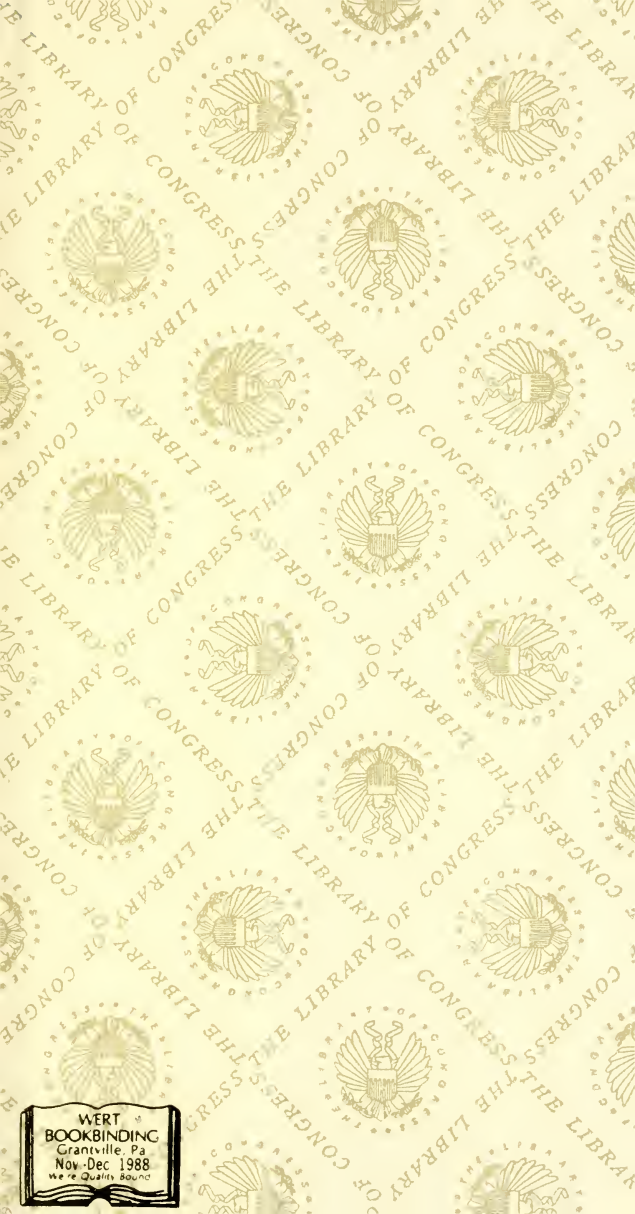
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